

pay their fair share of taxes. Where is the outrage? Well, I will tell you. It is out there. The American people are seeing this. They are saying: Wait a minute, Congress wants to pass this big tax break and they won't help the unemployed? They get it. They get it.

I can't believe Congress is doing this. I can't believe my friends on the other side of the aisle are so hard-hearted that they would hold hostage—that they would not let us move a bill to extend the unemployment benefits until we pass their bill to extend the tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans. Where is our sense of moral outrage at this?

Just one other thing. Unemployment benefits that we give out to people is not money that is thrown down a rat-hole. Quite frankly, one of the best economic stimuli we have is unemployment benefits, believe it or not. Why is that? Well, because people who get unemployment benefits—and right now, in my State it averages about \$300 a week. That is about a national average. It is right about there. It is about \$300 a week. That is about \$15,000 a year. That is lower than the poverty wage, by the way. If you think unemployment benefits are some big deal, it is lower than the poverty wage. So when they get that money, what do they do? They go out and they buy groceries. They buy some clothes for the kids. They buy the necessities of life. And that money acts as a multiplier to our economy.

This is Mark Zandi, Moody's economy.com, about how the GDP increase is generated by \$1 of stimulus going to these various things. Food stamps is the best. For every dollar we put into food stamps, we get an increase in GDP of \$1.74, again because people spend that money to buy food, most of which is grown, produced, processed, packaged, shipped, and bought in America. Unemployment benefits are right next to food stamps—\$1.61 increase in GDP for every dollar we put out, again for the same reason. People using unemployment benefits are not using them to buy a Mercedes. They are not using the benefits to buy a new, high-definition, 3D flat screen TV made in Japan. They are not using the benefits to buy a gold-encrusted, diamond-studded Rolex watch made in Switzerland. They are using these benefits to buy the necessities of life, most of which are made here in America. Extending the Bush tax cuts—for every dollar we put in, we get back 32 cents in GDP growth.

That is what the Republicans want. Why, when trying to stimulate the economy, would we put \$1 into something that returns us only 32 cents, when we can put \$1 in and get back \$1.61? How about infrastructure investments. We get back \$1.57 for every \$1. It is very close to unemployment benefits. Yet Republicans want to take money out of this and put it here. Why don't we take money out of here—the tax cuts—and put it here? That is a

better deal for our economy. It creates jobs, and we get an increase in economic activity in our country.

As I said earlier, here it is. The average UI benefit is about \$15,600 and the poverty level is \$21,756 for a family of four. It is a powerful benefit that provides food, clothes, housing, utilities—all of the things needed just to keep life going. That is what these unemployment benefits are spent on.

With the holidays coming, our economy needs the money and people need the benefits. Cutting off that revenue would be counterproductive for jobs. It is counterproductive for the people who need these benefits. It makes no sense economically to cut off unemployment benefits. But more importantly, it makes no sense morally. There is such a thing as right and wrong. There is such a thing as fair and unfair and just and unjust. It is not just, it is not fair, and it is not right that, through no fault of their own, we are saying to these people, the unemployed in America, the millions—whether it is 14.9 million or closer to 26 million or anywhere in between—it is just not right to say: Well, maybe we will extend your unemployment benefits after we extend the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest in our society. That is totally irresponsible. But that is where we find ourselves.

I say to the President of the United States: Mr. President, you made a lot of promises when you were campaigning in my State of Iowa, and one of the most important you made was that you were going to hold the line—and you said this time and time again—at \$250,000. You would extend the tax breaks to middle-income people below \$250,000. You ought to hold to that, Mr. President. You ought to hold to that.

We will see if the Republicans want to shut down the government. Do they want to shut the government down? That is what they are saying. We are going to have to have a resolution on the Senate floor—because it will run out—to keep the government going. They are saying they will not pass that unless and until we extend the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy.

I dare the Republicans to shut the government down just because they want to give tax breaks to the wealthy. I say if that is what they want to do, let the American people see the extent to which the Republicans will go in order to help their wealthy friends.

Mr. President, hold to your guns, hold to your guns on \$250,000 and below. Don't give in. Don't give up. The American people are behind you on this one, Mr. President. Tell them you want unemployment benefits extended, you want middle-class tax breaks extended, and we want to fund the government. We don't want to go into default. We want that first. Don't give up, Mr. President. The American people will be behind you, and this Congress will be behind you too.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, today the House passed legislation that would extend the tax cuts for those middle-class taxpayers who make under \$200,000 a year. That is a good thing, and I support that. But why on Earth would we extend the tax cuts for a certain segment of the population and not extend the tax cuts for everyone? Why would we do that? Who are the job creators in our country? What is the problem our country has right now? It is jobs. We have an unemployment rate that is hovering around 10 percent. So what should we be doing in Congress to try to alleviate that situation? We should be doing everything in our power to create jobs in the private sector. The private sector is where jobs will be created, where it will be something that will support a family.

Of course, we are going to support tax cuts for everyone in this country because we are in an economic recession. The idea of increasing taxes on the people who would create jobs is something that could only come out of Washington. All of us have been home for the last few weeks. Last week was Thanksgiving, and we were in grocery stores talking to our constituents. Time and time again I heard people in the real world, people who are creating jobs, saying: Why don't you all address the issues of this country? Don't you know what is happening?

Well, do you know something? They have a point. They have a point because, of course, many of us have been saying this for a long time. But here we are in December, the last month of the year. The IRS can't even print the tax forms because they don't know what the tax rates are going to be because Congress left in September and didn't finish its job. Now here we are in December and we are going to have a train wreck.

That is why those on our side signed a letter saying that we are not going to address any issue until we settle the tax issue and the issue of funding government. After that, there are many things that could be on the agenda. But those are two things that are essential. So knowing the way things work around here, and knowing that we could end up talking for 2 more weeks before we do anything, we are going to set the priority to say that it is tax cuts and it is funding the government, and if we can do other things, fine, but if we can't, then we go home.

I think the START Treaty is very important, and we are all looking at that. But we have to make sure the small businesspeople of our country know what to expect. And if they can hire people on even in this holiday season, it will make a difference.

President Reagan and President Kennedy and President Bush 43 all did something that had the same effect on our revenue in this country; they cut taxes and revenue increased. Cutting taxes is what increases and spurs the